



**Am I European?**

**Critical thinking and debate training**

## **What you will find in this pack**

In this resource, we outline the evidence collected on European identity in Autumn 2020 and a range of tools and techniques for supporting debate, discussion and critical thinking in your classroom.

- Tools to develop critical thinking in students
- Discussion techniques for disagreement
- Tips for building an argument

## Tools to develop critical thinking in students

Critical thinking is an essential component in debate because it underpins the idea that it's unhealthy to accept what we are being told without question. In many environments, individuals are told that to question ideas put to us is impolite or rude. However, in a world where online fraud has risen by more than a third in recent years, it is essential that we empower students to analyze information given to them and this can be done in a variety of ways.

### Assessment of critical thinking

The [Oxfam guide for global citizenship](#) contains a breakdown by age, of expectations for young people in critical thinking and this can be used to develop a picture of how student groups are working and also to “pin down” a measure of progress. assessment guidance which would support practice.

We would recommend gaining a picture of current critical thinking skills in students before starting lessons and this can be done by questionnaires, by holding a class discussion prior to the lesson and recording responses or simply by observation. At the end of the lesson conducted, the age breakdown can also enable you to measure distance travelled by students and establish progress made.

### Activity - Food tasting

One technique that can be utilized with young students is food tasting. This image comes from a lesson carried out with year 4 class in Mersin (Turkey). The students looked at different food traditions and how what you see actually affects what you eat. The activity involved students trying out and describing food that had been dyed different colours using food colouring and they were to predict how it would taste based on how it looked and then report on how it actually tasted and how the appearance affected their idea of the taste. The template below was used to structure the tasting experience

<i>Samain</i>		<i>Food</i>	
<i>Appearance</i>	<i>Reality</i>	<i>Appearance</i>	<i>Reality</i>
			

## My food tasting experience

What is it?	Does it look nice to eat?	What words describe it?	Was it what you expected?

### Activity - Two truths and a lie

A useful technique for older students is **two truths and a lie**. In this activity, students work in teams to develop a campaign – this can be something we want to investigate like stopping people from travelling and working in different European countries, or more lighthearted like banning the colour blue. As a group, they will need to come up with:

1. A name for the campaign
2. Three facts that will support the message they are sending. Two of these facts must be true but **one of them must be false**

They take it in turns to give a presentation on their messages and the audience have to rate them, both in terms of how persuasive their campaign is and also to guess which of the facts presented they think was the lie.

This activity can help students and young people see how compelling misinformation can be, particularly when it is placed within a lot of other information that is true. You can also follow up this activity with finding five facts from a social media feed and researching whether or not this information is true.



### I heard a rumour

The following activity can be adapted for older and younger students and allows them to investigate how easily information can pass from person to person without being interrogated. The aim is to start looking different kinds of information including:

**Disinformation** where a story is deliberately written to mislead and often intended to influence towards a particular viewpoint,

**Misinformation** simply describes a factually incorrect story. At the end of this page, you will have a chance to try and match the story to its fake news definition.

### Activity

In this activity, you agree a rumour that you want to start with the class. It will only run for a set period of time and the perimeters are that nobody should be hurt or offended by it. Give plenty of examples of positive stories – eg. hearing that a teacher will be made famous in a singing show, one of the students will be modelling for a clothing company and agree one to spread as a group. Throughout the week, try to speak to a set number of people each and ideally, use socially media. This is really helpful as it enables the class to track how many people are accessing the information and paying attention to it

At the end of the time frame, make it clear that it was a hoax and measure how many people believed your fake story,

### **.Useful links**

The following links have lesson plans, PowerPoints and videos that can be used to teach Media Literacy but they are also very helpful in teaching critical thinking:

[Association of Citizenship Teaching](#)

[BBC – Digital Literacy](#)

[Oxfam](#) have produced a guide to teaching controversial issues which includes a tips and case studies that can help with critical thinking and questioning.

[WCIA](#) offer bilingual Philosophy for Children materials you can download and use

[Full fact](#) is a great resource to check information presented in fake news

## Discussion Techniques

Teachers are always very confident with creating opportunities for discussion within their classes and this section is designed to look more at fostering respectful disagreement within classrooms. The key principles are:

To create multi-faceted discussions with lots of people's voices/opinions represented  
To support students in taking opposite sides of a discussion in order to find the truth in between

To empower students and teachers to investigate new concepts about identity and culture

### Assessment of communication skills

The [Oxfam guide for global citizenship](#) contains a breakdown by age, of expectations for young people in communication and this can be used to develop a picture of how student groups are working and also to "pin down" a measure of progress.

We would recommend gaining a picture of current communication skills in students before starting lessons and this can be done by questionnaires, by holding a class discussion prior to the lesson and recording responses or simply by observation. At the end of the lesson conducted, the age breakdown can also enable you to measure distance travelled by students and establish progress made.

## Tools for creating multi-faceted discussions

### Agree disagree / fair unfair continuums to explore own perspectives

One way that you can develop opinions from quieter students in the classroom is to ask students to answer their own opinions and then use it to lead into a classroom debate.

These can be used in a few different ways. You give a statement that you want to explore. Some examples might be:

**Events in Europe have an impact on all the countries around them.**

**Parents and teachers are always a great place to get information about other countries**

**People shouldn't be allowed to travel freely between European countries**

**Everyone in Europe basically has the same culture**

If you would like to get learners up and moving, on one side of the classroom can be 'agree' or 'fair' and the other side 'disagree' or 'unfair' – learners move around the room to indicate their views. You can then debate and discuss to understand where the views come from.

### Perspective mapping

An effective tool to support students in understanding different perspectives is to look at an event that has happened recently in the news. For example, how does the class feel about Coronavirus and its impact on communities? Before starting a

discussion, ask students to work in groups to think of people who will have different perspectives on the issue and this might include:

people made happy by it (in the case of Covid – drug companies)

people relatively unaffected by it (arguably those who are rich and live in remote locations)

people who have had better experiences than you (those in countries where the virus was handled quickly and effectively)

people who had worse experiences than you (those in countries where the virus could not be contained)

### **The role of the teacher**

The teacher can take a really useful role in developing these skills in participants. Oxfam have highlighted six roles a teacher can take with learners to generate different kinds of discussion and this can be a helpful way to make sure discussions in your class offer a space for a variety of perspectives and that the way students respond to new opinions is fair and balanced

1. **Committed** The teacher is free to share their own views for young people to challenge, making it clear that this role could lead to biased discussion.
2. **Objective or Academic** The teacher gives an explanation of all possible viewpoints without stating their own position.
3. **Devil's Advocate** The teacher deliberately adopts an opposite stance irrespective of their own viewpoint. This approach helps ensure all views are covered and challenges existing beliefs.
4. **Advocate** The teacher presents all available viewpoints then concludes by stating own position with reasons.
5. **Impartial Chairperson** The teacher ensures that all viewpoints are represented, through young people's statements or published sources. Teacher facilitates but does not state their own position.
6. **Declared Interest** The teacher declares their own viewpoint so that young people can judge later bias, then presents all positions as objectively as possible.

### **Creating discussions with disagreement**

It can feel daunting to ask your students to actively disagree with one another when so much of life at school is trying to work harmoniously. However, the following techniques are aimed at helping students shift their perspective from being on a "side" of an argument to considering what it is to use debate to consider different sides of an issue.

### **Investigating communication failures**

Before getting interested in a question for discussion, it can be really helpful to look at common mistakes that people make when they argue. Participants often don't consider critically how arguments are built and observing argument fails can help us develop a way of looking critically at information presented and ask ourselves if what we are saying is reasonable. For teachers' use: on the sheet overleaf the answers are:



## How not to argue

On this sheet, we see five different argument mistakes. Can you identify why these approaches aren't helpful?



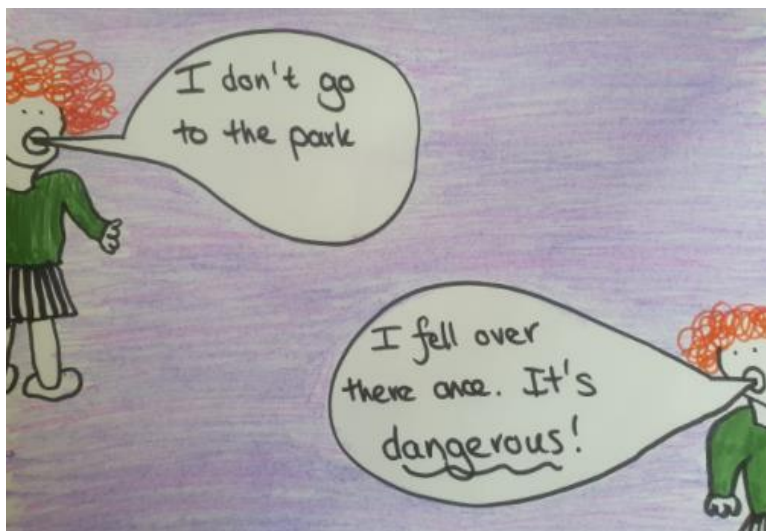
This person isn't learning anything. He's just shouting his viewpoint and he won't get anywhere because it will just make his opponent angry



Her argument is based on fake news



They aren't listening to the other's point of view and also they won't change their minds



She thinks her experience is always true but it's not. Lots of people go to the park and it's perfectly safe.

## Using questions effectively

When you're engaging in an argument, it's really important to keep a dialogue going. You being able to **listen to, engage with** and **challenge** the other person's viewpoint enables you both to solve problems and work together to find the truth. Lots of people see arguing as a competition but a rich argument includes both speaking your points and listening to the points of your opponent.

A great way to do that is to use questioning techniques. You probably already use a lot of techniques in everyday conversations but being aware of the type of questioning that you're asking and the impact that it has is a great way to take control of an argument.

### Clarifying

In discussions, clarifying questions can be a great way of supporting someone to tell us more about their point of view. Essentially, clarifying questions tend to open up the conversation, getting more information from the speaker and allowing us to feedback what we are hearing from them. You can also use clarifying questions to check the details of an argument and make sure they aren't missing important pieces of information

**Examples:** Are you saying you think people should be able to travel in Europe?

When you say you want a classmate from somewhere else, where did you have in mind?

### Challenging

Challenging questions make it clear you disagree with what that person is saying and are a great way to test a strong argument. Be careful though because they can also shut down the conversation, particularly if the person you're arguing with is already angry!

**Examples:** You said that you feel confident with information you get from your teachers. Do you think their information is 100% reliable?

Do you think the right to identity isn't important and that's why it wasn't highly ranked?

### Changing

Changing questions can help open up a conversation or help a speaker who is in trouble. You take what they're saying and suggest a slight change to make it a more reasonable request. Often arguments end up being about the details of a suggestion rather than a large scale idea so change can help refocus on what is valuable.

**Examples:** You said everyone in Europe has the same values. Might it be fair to say that most of us have similar values instead?

### Compare

If you disagree with a speaker, comparisons are a brilliant way to discredit their idea. Equally, if you agree with a speaker, comparisons are a great way to add support for their idea! With comparisons, you give an example where something like their idea is happening/has happened and use it to forecast the "real world" consequences

**Examples:** If we compare the UK with Denmark, Denmark teach about cultural identity much more and are also much happier. Do you think there is a link between the two?

## Sorting Questions

Look at the questions and sort them into the correct part of the grid below. When you've sorted, add your own!

**Is everyone ready to go?**

**How are you today?**

**To be clear, are you saying you think all scientists are men?**

**Are you going to have fruit for breakfast or just refuse anything and then be hungry all day?**

**Can we meet at five instead of six please?**

<b>Clarifying</b>	<b>Comparing</b>
<b>Changing</b>	<b>Challenging</b>

## Listening experiments

A similar activity to do with listening is taking the grid above, put your students into partners and ask them to try out different questioning techniques and observe the impact that these have upon the speaker. It's quite a challenging activity for the speaker so its useful to have them talk about something familiar like what they had for breakfast that morning or what they did at the weekend. We are including some prompts in the boxes below:

<b>Clarifying</b> So what did you have to drink? What sort of time was this? Who was there?	<b>Comparing</b> Was it better than the previous weekend? Are you glad to be back here now? Is it your favourite?
<b>Changing</b> Would you have done the same at a different (time of day/weekend)? If you'd changed the people, would it have been the same? Do you think it would be the same in winter/summer?	<b>Challenging</b> Some would say xxx is a better time. What do you think? I feel like there's a lot of xxx at the moment. Do you agree? Did you worry you might have missed out on xxx?

## Building an argument



Making an argument is a great way to bring all the activities completed so far together. After voicing and defending opinions in informal class discussions and probing one another's ideas, students are then ready to start considering making an argument more formally.

Our suggested way of building an argument is the **hamburger**.

**Make your point.** This might be your belief (I think all of Europe should be treated the same) or a suggestion (we should have EU passports and not individual country ones)

**Explain your point.** If it's a belief, give us reasons why you believe this and make sure you root them in facts, figures, and real life events. An important part of argument analysis is the question "is this always true?"

**Explain your point.** If it's a suggestion, give us research that points to its ability to solve an existing problem. Are there statistics that back up your argument? Has something like this been done before? It's important to do you research

**Sum up, explaining impact.** If it's a belief, give us a sense of what the world would be like if everyone shared your view. If it's a suggestion, give us a sense of what the world would be like if your suggestion was adopted by everyone.

On the page overleaf, we are attaching a mark sheet that can be used and adapted for observing speeches. Students may find it useful to refer to when they prepare their arguments to ensure they have explained their ideas in more detail. There are also a variety of activities and resources to support students at different levels to build an argument effectively.

## Mark sheet for argument building

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Topic for speech:</b>

<b>Signposting each new argument</b>	<b>Y/N?</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Argument(s) explained in detail, with evidence</b>		
<b>Linking argument(s) to contemporary issues</b>		
<b>Prioritised the strongest material for the speech</b>		
<b>Shows full understanding of the questions</b>		
<b>Able to answer the questions confidently and substantially</b>		
<b>Answers expand the case and the speaker's persuasiveness</b>		
<b>Speaks confidently</b>		
<b>Maintains contact with the audience</b>		
<b>Uses time effectively</b>		
<b>Is not tied to their notes</b>		
<b>Varies tone appropriately</b>		

## Identifying Argument Structure

Cut these up and rearrange them to find the point, explain, sum up of argument building.

<p>Our identity is about who we are and what we do. It is the part of our self that we cannot change, no matter how much pressure is put upon us to do so. When we consider the worst of society, we see the right to identity is the first right to come under pressure. Consider the Black Lives Matter movement as an example.</p>	<p>Today, I will be explaining why the right to identity is the most important, more important than either the right to opinion or family.</p>	<p>If we lived in a world where the right to identity was at the forefront of our beliefs, we would see greater equality because all people would be respected for their unique identity.</p>
<p>If we completely ended free movement until 2030, we would be able to get the pandemic under control, allow countries to better support their citizens and make sure that each country prospers.</p>	<p>Currently, more than 1.3 million European people live in a country different to the one that they were born into and this creates enormous problems. Since Coronavirus is moving from country to country, the free movement of people is making the pandemic worse and with every place having a different lockdown procedure, people should be stopped from travelling until the situation is under control.</p>	<p>Ladies and Gentlemen, today I will be suggesting why we should end free movement in Europe. We will no longer enable European people to work or live anywhere other than the place they were born into.</p>
<p>Today I will be speaking on the topic of European Values. I am going to speak on what I believe European values are, why they are important and how we need to teach them in our school.</p>	<p>These essential values should underpin the Europe that we build for the future. If we agree and act upon them, we be able to observe a better cohesion between countries and a coordinated effort where people from different places in Europe can work and learn together in harmony</p>	<p>European values should be a collection of best practice that comes from Europe and these might be decided by the European Union. My suggestions might be a celebration of diversity as we have seen in the multitude of different languages, history and civilization as demonstrated by Greece and Rome, and progressive practice in the face of global challenges.</p>

## Making an argument

### **Make your point**

Why does the world need it? What are you going to be telling us about?

### **Explain your point**

why do we need it? What will it do to make the world better? Can you think of somewhere where it's already happening?

### **Sum up your point**

Help us to imagine how your argument will make the world a better place



## Further Reading

WCIA have created an interactive debate training for students on their website and you can find it here [WCIA Online Courses - Welsh Centre for International Affairs](#)

For students aged 14 and older, there is a training in formal debate which you can find here [Debate Training - Welsh Centre for International Affairs \(wcia.org.uk\)](#)

For a full range of topics for discussion and ideas, you can look here [International Debate Education Association \(IDEA\) \(idebate.org\)](#)

For tips, a debating handbook and previous topics, [click here](#)

For ideas for what to hold arguments about, look here at [Debate Motion Central](#)